Cont B1

above-identified patent applications are incorporated herein by reference to the extent they are consistent with this application and the inventions described herein.

On page 14, after line 20 and before line 21, please insert the following heading.

B2

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend claims 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 23, 26 and 27. Please add claims 28-31. Following this amendment claims 1-30 will be pending. A clean version of the amended claims is set forth below. In accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(b), also enclosed, in Appendix B, is a marked-up version of the claims to show amendments made in them.

B3

Cont C1

1. (Once amended) A method of modifying a substrate material by means of a said bacterial starter culture being capable of being metabolically active in said food and/or feed product starting material, the bacterial culture not being susceptible to attack by bacteriophages, bacterial starter culture made by a method comprising

(i) isolating a bacterial strain which is not capable of DNA replication, RNA transcription or protein synthesis in said food and/or feed product starting material but is capable of metabolically modifying the food and/or feed product starting material,

(ii) propagating the isolated bacterial strain in a medium wherein the strain is capable of replicating to obtain the bacterial starter culture of said strain.

4. (Once amended) A method according to claim 3 wherein the mutant strain is a Pur⁻mutant.

B4

5. (Once amended) A method according to claim 3 wherein the mutant strain is a *thyA* mutant.

7. (Once amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the substrate material comprises at least one compound that inhibits the DNA replication, RNA transcription or the protein synthesis of the bacterial strain.

8. (Once amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the substrate material is a starting material for an edible product, comprising milk, a vegetable material, a meat product, a must, a fruit juice, a wine, a dough or a batter.

10. (Once amended) A method according to claim 9 wherein the bacterial culture is a culture of *Lactococcus lactis*.

11. (Once amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the bacterial culture added to the substrate material includes the bacterial strain at a concentration in the range of 10^5 to 10^9 CFU/ml or g of the material.

12. (Once amended) A method according to claim 1 where the bacterial culture comprises a genetically modified strain which, relative to its parent strain is enhanced in at least one metabolic pathway.

17. (Once amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein the bacterial culture comprises a bacterial strain which is capable of increasing the size of the cells without mitosis.

18. (Once amended) A modified lactic acid bacterium that is modified to become incapable of performing DNA replication, RNA transcription or protein synthesis in a specifically defined substrate material which is limited with respect to at least one

compound that is required by the bacterial strain for DNA replication, RNA transcription or protein synthesis, said modified bacterial strain is capable of being metabolically active in said substrate material, whereby the strain is not susceptible to attack by bacteriophages, subject to the limitation, that the lactic acid bacterium is not a strain selected from the group consisting of strain DN101, DN102, DN103, DN104 and DN105 (DSM12289).

23. (Once amended) A composition according to claim 22 which further comprises at least one component enhancing the viability of the bacterial culture during storage including a bacterial nutrient or a cryoprotectant.

26. (Once amended) A method of preparing a food and/or a feed product, comprising adding a bacterial starter culture to a food and/or a feed product starting material, said bacterial starter culture being capable of being metabolically active in said food and/or feed product starting material, the bacterial starter culture not being susceptible to attack by bacteriophages, the bacterial starter culture made by a method comprising

(i) isolating a bacterial strain which is not capable of DNA replication, RNA transcription or protein synthesis in said food and/or feed product starting material but is capable of metabolically modifying the food and/or feed product starting material,

(ii) propagating the isolated bacterial strain in a medium wherein the strain is capable of replicating to obtain the bacterial starter culture of said strain, and

(iii) maintaining the thus-obtained inoculated food and/or feed product starting material under such conditions that the bacterial strain of the bacterial starter culture is metabolically active,

whereby, if the food and/or feed product starting material is contaminated with a bacteriophage, the metabolic activity of the bacterial starter culture is substantially unaffected by the bacteriophage.

27. (Once amended) A method of preventing a lactic acid bacterial starter culture infection by bacteriophages in the manufacturing of a food or feed product, the method comprising adding as a starter culture a lactic acid bacterium obtained by the method according to claim 1 to a food or feed product starting material which is limited with respect to at least one compound that is required by the bacterial strain for DNA replication, RNA transcription or protein synthesis and keeping the thus inoculated starting material under conditions where the lactic acid bacterium is metabolically active, whereby, if the substrate material is contaminated with a bacteriophage, the metabolic activity of the bacterial culture is substantially unaffected by the bacteriophage.

Please add new claims 28-31:

28. (New) A method according to claim 4 wherein the mutant strain is *Lactococcus lactis* strain DN105 deposited under the accession number DSM 12289.

29. (New) A method according to claim 5 wherein the mutant strain is *Lactococcus lactis* strain MBP71 deposited under the accession number DSN12891.

30. (New) A method for reducing susceptibility to attack by bacteriophages in a substrate material comprising:

(i) isolating an auxotrophic bacterial strain which maintains its metabolic activity in the absence of an auxotrophic component in the substrate material;

(ii) adding the auxotrophic bacterial strain to said substrate material.

31. (New) A method of preparing a dairy flavouring and/or a product for cheese flavouring comprising, adding a bacterial starter culture to a dairy flavouring and/or a product for cheese flavouring starting material, said bacterial starter culture being capable of being metabolically active in said dairy flavouring and/or product for cheese flavouring starting material, the bacterial starter culture not being susceptible to attack by bacteriophages, the bacterial starter culture made by a method comprising

(i) isolating a bacterial strain which is not capable of DNA replication, RNA transcription or protein synthesis in said dairy flavouring and/or product for cheese flavouring starting material but is capable of metabolically modifying the dairy flavouring and/or product for cheese flavouring starting material,

(ii) propagating the isolated bacterial strain in a medium wherein the strain is capable of replicating to obtain the bacterial starter culture of said strain, and

(iii) maintaining the thus-obtained inoculated dairy flavouring and/or product for cheese flavouring starting material under such conditions that the bacterial strain of the bacterial starter culture is metabolically active,

whereby, if the dairy flavouring and/or product for cheese flavouring starting material is contaminated with a bacteriophage, the metabolic activity of the bacterial starter culture is substantially unaffected by the bacteriophage.

REMARKS

I. SOME CLAIMS HAVE BEEN AMENDED. A CLEAN COPY OF ALL PENDING CLAIMS IS ENCLOSED.

Applicants amended some of their claims without introducing impermissible new matter. Support for the amendments is found in the specification.